

THE RECEPTION OF ROMANOS IN MIDDLE BYZANTINE HOMILETICS AND HYMNOGRAPHY

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IT HAS LONG BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED that Romanos the Melode stands out as a composer of dramatic liturgical poetry, not only during the sixth century, when he flourished in Constantinople, but in the whole history of Byzantine literature.¹ No liturgical texts either earlier or later quite match the extraordinary balance of poetry, theology, and dramatic narrative that this hymnographer achieves in his kontakia. It is interesting, in view of such scholarly recognition, that Romanos's influence on later liturgical writing, including both hymns and homilies, has not been extensively studied. Whereas earlier influences, including both Greek and Syriac sources, on Romanos have attracted much attention,² his impact in turn on later writers has not yet, as far as I am aware, received much notice. This article will attempt to prove that, far from shining as a bright but ephemeral light in the sixth century and then fading into obscurity, Romanos the Melode influenced later preachers and hymnographers at least through the ninth century, and perhaps even beyond.

One reason why Romanos's impact on later writers has been doubted may be the pervasive, but unsubstantiated, belief that both the composition and the use of kontakia in liturgical services ceased a century or two

This article is based on the paper delivered at the Colloquium on Romanos the Melode on 15 November 2005 but has been considerably revised, with the help of two anonymous readers and my own changing ideas on the topic in the course of a year.

1 See, for example, K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur* (Munich, 1897), 663; K. Mitsakis, *Bυζαντινή Υψογραφία*, 2nd ed. (Thessalonike, 1971); J. Koder, trans., *Romanos Melodos: Die Hymnen*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 2005–6); D. Krueger, “Writing and Redemption in the Hymns of Romanos the Melodist,” *BMGS* 27 (2003): 2.

2 For arguments concerning primarily Greek influences, see J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines de la poésie religieuse à Byzance* (Paris, 1977); K. Krumbacher, *Miscellen zu Romanos* (Munich, 1909), 1–138. For Syriac roots, and especially the influence of Ephrem, see P. Maas, “Das Kontakion,” *BZ* 19 (1910): 285–306; S. Brock, “From Ephrem to Romanos,” *StP* 20 (1989): 139–51 = idem, *From Ephrem to Romanos: Interactions between Syriac and Greek in Late Antiquity* (Aldershot, 1999), IV; W. L. Petersen, *The Diatessaron and Ephrem Syrus as Sources for Romanos the Melodist* (Utrecht, 1984).

after his lifetime. The theory, first propounded by J. B. Pitra³ and Egon Wellesz⁴ and perpetuated in such major handbooks as the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*⁵ and the *New Grove Dictionary of Music*,⁶ that the kontakion was replaced sometime in the course of the seventh or early eighth centuries by the kanon in the Byzantine office, has been thoroughly refuted both by José Grosdidier de Matons⁷ and, more recently, by Alexander Lingas.⁸ The misconception arose mainly because of a failure to distinguish between two separate strands of liturgical development in Constantinople, the cathedral *asmatike akolouthia* (sung office) and the monastic office, elaborated especially in the Stoudios monastery in the course of the eighth century.⁹ Both Grosdidier de Matons and

3 J.-B. Pitra, *Analecta sacra spicilegio Solesmeni parata* (Paris, 1876), 1:xxxvii.

4 E. Wellesz, “Kontakion and Kanon,” *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Musica sacra* (Tournai, 1952), 131–33; idem, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1961), 157, 199, 203–4.

5 Article by E. Jeffreys in *ODB* 2:1148. “The dominant form of hymn, the kontakion, was gradually superseded during the eighth century by the recently devised kanon.”

6 Article by C. Thodberg in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. S. Sadie (London, 1980), 10:181.

7 E.g., J. Grosdidier de Matons, “Liturgie et hymnographie: Kontakion et canon,” *DOP* 34–35 (1980–81): esp. 41–42; idem, ed., *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, SC 99 (Paris, 1964), 1:20–21. Here Grosdidier de Matons asserts on the basis of manuscript evidence that the process of enriching and updating kontakaria with new hymns was especially strong in the ninth century; he in fact argues that the period of iconoclasm represented a renaissance for the genre of kontakion. He does concede, however, that kontakia ceased being written after about the tenth century, except in Byzantine Italy.

8 See especially his “The Liturgical Place of the Kontakion in Constantinople,” in *Liturgy, Architecture, and Art in the Byzantine World: Papers of the XVIII International Byzantine Congress (Moscow, 8–15 August 1991)*, ed. C. C. Akentiev, *Byzantinorossica* 1 (St. Petersburg, 1995), 50–57. I am grateful to Dr. Lingas for drawing my attention to this problem and informing me of his article.

9 For a general introduction to the history of the Constantinopolitan liturgy, see R. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today* (Collegeville, MN, 1986).

Lingas recognized that in fact the main liturgical setting for kontakia, from the time of Romanos and beyond, was the cathedral vigil preceding both major and minor feast days.¹⁰ Such vigils, unlike the monastic office of Orthros in which kanons evolved, were intended for lay audiences and were celebrated in cathedral and parish churches throughout Constantinople.¹¹

While kontakia and kanons thus represent distinct hymnographic genres, since they developed in different liturgical contexts, they do show signs of cross-fertilization, especially in the eighth and ninth centuries, when some hymnographers were in fact engaged in writing both forms. A literary study of this fertile period of hymnographic production remains to be written, although Wellesz signaled its importance nearly fifty years ago.¹² Among the desirable consequences of such a study would be a better understanding of the effect of Romanos's work on later kanons and kontakia; judging by close parallels between works such as Andrew of Crete's Great Kanon or some of Theodore of Stoudios's kontakia and the hymns of Romanos,¹³ it is likely that he exerted considerable influence from at least the seventh through the ninth centuries. There is not space in this article to discuss this process in detail; instead we will focus on a few, more general, aspects of continuity between Romanos's kontakia and middle Byzantine homilies and hymns. Such features include the dramatic treatment of biblical stories,¹⁴ the

¹⁰ Taft points out that the term "vigil" covers a variety of different combinations of offices. All-night vigils before various feasts are mentioned as early as the fourth century by Gregory Nazianzen and John Chrysostom; in the eighth century, the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger* mentions vigils in honor of saints, which the young man attended in the company of his mother. For references and discussion, see Taft, *Liturgy of the Hours*, 171–74.

¹¹ In the kontakion "On the man possessed with devils," Romanos himself describes the performance of kontakia in all-night vigils: "The faithful people in love of Christ, / coming together, keeps nightly vigil with psalms and odes, / unceasingly singing hymns to God. / Then, after David has sung <a psalm>, / and we have been gladdened by a well-ordered reading from the scriptures, / let us again sing a hymn to Christ and castigate the enemies . . ." J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, SC 114 (Paris, 1965), 3:54–56.1.1–6; trans. M. Carpenter, *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist*, vol. 1, *On the Person of Christ* (Columbia, MS, 1970), 111, with adjustments; quoted in Lingas, "Liturgical Place of the Kontakion" (n. 8 above), 50–51.

¹² Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music* (n. 4 above), 236.

¹³ See *ibid.*, 204–5, 229–30, for examples.

¹⁴ Averil Cameron provides an innovative study of how narrative is used to teach theology in the early Church in her *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse*, Sather Classical Lectures 55 (Berkeley–Los Angeles–Oxford, 1991), esp. 89–119.

attempt by various means to induce a penitential frame of mind in both lay and monastic congregations, and the depiction of the Virgin Mary, or Theotokos, as a human figure with thoughts and emotions.¹⁵ It is possible that Romanos's focus on the dramatic and liturgically immediate meaning of Scripture caused later hymnographers and preachers to develop this form of exegesis further. If so, it may be argued that the sixth-century hymnographer's legacy to the middle Byzantine liturgical tradition was significant indeed.

The use of dramatic dialogue, which includes not only real or imagined conversation between two characters but also monologue, internal soliloquy, and "extra-textual" dialogue between the preacher and his audience, is not of course an invention of Romanos the Melode.¹⁶ It was widely used in both Greek and Syriac liturgical texts from an early date and goes back to ancient roots in the Near East.¹⁷ Much work remains to be done, however, on Romanos's employment of this device and on his interest in the physical, emotional, and intellectual responses of the human person to divine revelation. Georgia Frank's recent studies of Romanos's depiction of "the sensory self" through dialogue shows just how subtle this hymnographer was in his treatment of human spiritual development.¹⁸ Romanos's focus on female as well as male biblical characters is also striking, while also completely

¹⁵ L.-M. Peltomaa has contributed to this field with a paper delivered to the 2005 Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on Romanos the Melode titled "Mary and the Oikonomia in the Poetry of Romanos." I am grateful to Dr. Peltomaa for many fruitful conversations on this subject.

¹⁶ For discussion of these various forms of dialogue in Byzantine homiletics, see M. Cunningham, "Dramatic Device or Didactic Tool? The Function of Dialogue in Byzantine Preaching," in *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. E. Jeffreys (Aldershot, 2003), 101–13, esp. 102. The distinction between "intra-textual" (between the characters portrayed in the hymn or sermon) and "extra-textual" (between the hymnographer or orator and the congregation) dialogue is made by I. Lunde in her "Dialogue and the Rhetoric of Authority in Medieval Preaching," in *Dialogue and Rhetoric: Communication Strategies in Russian Text and Theory*, ed. I. Lunde, *Slavica Bergensia* 1 (Bergen, 1999), 84–101, esp. 85.

¹⁷ S. Brock has written numerous studies on dialogue hymns in the Syriac tradition. See, for example, "Dramatic Dialogue Poems," *IV Symposium Syriacum: Literary Genres in Syriac Literature*, ed. H. J. W. Drijvers, R. Lavenant, C. Molenberg, and G. J. Reinink, OCA 229 (Rome, 1987), 135–47; idem, "Dialogue Hymns of the Syriac Churches," *Sobornost* 5, no. 2 (1983): 35–45.

¹⁸ G. Frank, "Dialogue and Deliberation: The Sensory Self in the Hymns of Romanos the Melodist," in *Religion and the Self in Antiquity*, ed. D. Brakke, M. L. Satlow, and S. Weitzman (Bloomington–Indianapolis, 2005), 163–79. See also *ibid.*, "Romanos and the Night Vigil in the Sixth Century," in *Byzantine Christianity*, vol. 3 of *A People's History of Christianity*, ed. D. Krueger (Minneapolis, 2006), 59–78.

consistent with that of the evangelists, especially Luke, who repeatedly emphasized the important roles of various women surrounding Christ.¹⁹

Dialogue for Romanos, as for many other patristic writers, vividly illustrates the paradox of the Incarnation.²⁰ In the first place, it is paradoxical that Christ, who is God, both speaks with and is addressed by human beings. This reflects the underlying Christian belief that God the Father, who is unknowable, has always expressed his revelation to humanity primarily through words and by the creative power of Christ, the Word. The feast of Theophany, or the baptism of Christ, is an occasion on which the Savior's two natures, the human and the divine, are revealed to the faithful.²¹ In his kontakion on this subject, Romanos uses dialogue to dramatize John the Baptist's fear at encountering and baptizing the man who is also God. As the kontakion shows, John eventually accepts this exalted role, while at the same time acknowledging his own humble status. This spiritual transformation occurs in response not only to physical contact between the two protagonists but above all through their dialogue. Christ speaks "ineffable and dread words" as the One "who orders the clouds to envelop the heavens like a garment" (Psalm 146 [147]: 8); simultaneously, however, his command to John remains human and personal.²² To take another example, in the first kontakion on the Nativity of Christ, Romanos has Mary, meditating on his simultaneous humanity and divinity, address her Son in the following words: "Tell me, my Child, how were you sown, or how were you planted in me? / I see you, my flesh and blood, and I am amazed. . . ."²³

¹⁹ See, for example, S. E. Miller, *Women in Mark's Gospel*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement 259 (London, 2004); I. R. Kitzberger, *Transformative Encounters: Jesus and Women Re-reviewed* (Leiden, 2000); C. F. Parvey, "The Theology and Leadership of Women in the New Testament," in *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. R. R. Ruether (New York, 1974), 117–49, esp. 138–42; B. Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus' Attitudes to Women and Their Roles as Reflected in His Earthly Life* (Cambridge, 1984).

²⁰ See J. Kecskeméti, "Doctrine et drame dans la prédication grecque," *Euphrosyne* 21 (1993): 29–68.

²¹ Mt 3:13–17; Mk 1:9–11; Lk 3:21–22; Jn 1:29–34.

²² See *Kontakion on the Baptism of Christ*, stanzas 12 and 14, Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, SC 110 (Paris, 1965), 2:250.12.1; 254.14.5–6 (Grosdidier de Matons calls this feast "Epiphany"); E. Lash, trans., *St. Romanos, Kontakia on the Life of Christ* (San Francisco–London–Pymble, 1995), 44–45.

²³ *Kontakion on the Nativity I*, Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, 2:52.2.7–8; trans. Lash, *Kontakia*, 3–4.

Romanos uses dialogue not only to express christological doctrine but also to explore the characters of biblical personages. In his kontakion on the Samaritan woman, the hymnographer dramatically portrays the encounter between the woman and Christ: "For seeing the Master tired and thirsty / and crying, 'Woman, give me drink,' she was not irritated, / but said reproachfully, 'And how can you, being a Jew, make a request of me?'"²⁴ With these words, and in the dialogue that follows, Romanos adds to the already lengthy conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan recounted in John 4:4–42. Not only does he invent extra speeches for these personages, but he also speculates about words that they did *not* utter as, for example, in the line, "For she did not say, 'I am not giving you, a foreigner, a drink,' but said, 'How can you ask. . . .'"²⁵ In his kontakion on Peter's denial, Romanos invents hypothetical speeches for the apostle which reveal his tortured state of mind.²⁶ Adding to the dramatic tension in this hymn are speeches by Christ to his chief disciple, exclamations by the narrator, or hymnographer, to both Peter and his audience, and conversations, building on those recorded in the synoptic Gospels, between Peter and the maid-servants and the other disciples. Romanos skillfully brings his audience to sympathize with this most human disciple; by using dramatic dialogue he teaches unequivocally that Christ has boundless mercy not only for Peter but for all sinners, past and present. It is striking that whereas Romanos uses dialogue to expose Peter's moral failings, he avoids engaging in this way with the most sinful of the apostles, Judas.²⁷

In examining this aspect of Romanos the Melode's influence on later liturgical texts, it will be most fruitful to turn first to middle Byzantine homilies. Whereas hymnography, including the monastic genre of the kanon, does, as we shall see later, include some dialogic development of biblical themes, this is limited to a certain extent by metrical and thematic considerations. The longer and less fixed genre of the festal sermon, on the other hand, allowed more scope for dramatic treatment of the subject

²⁴ Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, 2:334.6.2–4; trans. Lash, *Kontakia*, 65.

²⁵ Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, 2:334.6.7–8; trans. Lash, *Kontakia*, 65.

²⁶ J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, SC 128 (Paris, 1967), 4:116–34 (stanzas 4–19).

²⁷ Ibid., 4:70–96.

matter;²⁸ as in the case of Romanos's kontakia, the extent to which it is employed depends on the feast days being celebrated and the biblical or apocryphal narrative that lies behind them.²⁹

Before examining the influence of Romanos on middle Byzantine homiletics, however, it might be useful to discuss briefly the relationship between homiletics and hymnography. The early connection between the two literary genres, although recognized by scholars for some time, still awaits full analysis.³⁰ Romanos's kontakia have been called "homilies in verse,"³¹ whereas many Byzantine homilies, especially those that employ the rhythmic, "asianic" style,³² resemble hymns in prose. Cross-fertilization seems undeniable, but it is also important to recognize the defining characteristics of each liturgical genre. Some of these, such as the formal metrical rules for hymnography, as opposed to variable prose rhythms in homilies, are generic differences. Another important feature of sermons, which is not shared by most liturgical hymns, is their length: as far as we can tell, preachers

were allowed a generous amount of time, either in the divine liturgy or, increasingly, in all-night vigils before Sundays or major feast days, which gave them considerable freedom to experiment with rhetorical styles, from measured, periodic prose to a more rhythmic, poetic verse, even within the same oration. Further, the authorial voice is more prominent in homiletics, whether this is used to express humility in the prologue or authority in calling the congregation to worship, or to interpret, often in quite an individual way, the meaning of Scripture or a particular feast day. As Derek Krueger has demonstrated, even such a self-conscious hymnographer as Romanos, who provides a hidden clue to his authorship in acrostics, does not intrude as an authoritative presence very often in his kontakia.³³

By the sixth century, Byzantine homiletics had developed from a variety of genres into one dominant form, the festal sermon,³⁴ which celebrates a liturgical event such as an event in the life of Christ or the Virgin Mary or the feast day of a saint.³⁵ Exceptions to this rule of course exist, in the form of occasional or polemical homilies delivered in response to a single event or external threat,³⁶ but in general the exegetical or catechetical homilies produced in such quantity by fourth- or fifth-century preachers such as John Chrysostom ceased

²⁸ On the relative lengths of Byzantine homilies, see T. Antonopoulou, *The Homilies of the Emperor Leo VI* (Leiden, 1997), 104–5.

²⁹ A number of Marian feast days, introduced between the sixth and the eighth centuries, including those of the Virgin's Nativity, Entry into the Temple, Conception, and Dormition, are based on apocryphal texts such as the *Protevangelion of James* and the various Dormition narratives. These accounts allow for imaginative and dialogic treatment as, for example, in John of Euboea's sermon on the Conception, which provides dialogue for Anna, Mary's mother, as she prays and mourns in her garden before the conception. See John of Euboea, *On the Conception*, PG 96:1472–73; M. Cunningham, trans., "Wider Than Heaven": Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God (Crestwood, NY, 2008); eadem, "All-Holy Infant": Byzantine and Western Views on the Conception of the Virgin Mary," *SVThQ* 50, nos. 1–2 (2006): 139. For sermons on the Dormition, which also frequently contain a dramatic element, see B. E. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY, 1998). The development of apocryphal accounts of the Dormition is traced in S. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford, 2002).

³⁰ See, for example, Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines* (n. 2 above), 3–47; C. Hannick discusses the differences between the two genres in his "The Theotokos in Byzantine Hymnography: Typology and Allegory," in *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Aldershot, 2005), 69–70; but see also N. Tsironis, "From Poetry to Liturgy: The Cult of the Virgin in the Middle Byzantine Era," in *ibid.*, 92–95.

³¹ Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines*, 3.

³² For discussions of this style (also called "asianic"), see G. A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton, 1994), 95–96; G. O. Rowe, "Style," in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.–A.D. 400*, ed. S. E. Porter (Leiden–New York–Cologne, 1997), 156; E. Norden, *Die Antike Kunstsprosa* (Berlin, 1909), 1:126.

³³ See D. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness* (Philadelphia, 2004), 169–74. One important exception to this general rule exists in Andrew of Crete's Great Kanon, which expresses a personal, although also universal, form of penitential supplication. This hymn will be discussed further below. It is published in PG 97:1305–86; *Tριώδιον κατανυκτικόν* (Athens, 1960), 271–88.

³⁴ The origins of the festal sermon lie of course in the fourth century, when various bishops, including Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostom, began to adorn the emerging feast days of the Church. On the rhetorical characteristics of high-style Christian preaching, see T. Ameringer, *The Stylistic Influence of the Second Sophistic on the Panegyrical Sermons of St. John Chrysostom* (Washington, DC, 1921); J. Campbell, *The Influence of the Second Sophistic on the Style of the Sermons of St. Basil the Great* (Washington, DC, 1922); R. R. Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford, 1969).

³⁵ M. Cunningham, "Preaching and the Community," in *Church and People in Byzantium*, ed. R. Morris (Birmingham, 1990), 36–41; this account is corrected and refined by T. Antonopoulou in her *The Homilies of the Emperor Leo VI* (n. 28 above), 95–115. On changes in homiletics after the sixth century, see also M. Cunningham, "The Sixth Century: A Turning-Point for Byzantine Homiletics?" in *The Sixth Century: End or Beginning?* ed. P. Allen and E. Jeffreys (Brisbane, 1996), 176–86.

³⁶ For example, Photios's sermons on the attack of the Rus' in 860, the inauguration of a church in the palace, and the restoration of the image of the Virgin in St Sophia. See C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople* (Cambridge, MA, 1958), 82–110, 184–90, 286–96.

being transmitted in any great quantity.³⁷ Along with this generic change, it is noticeable that the emphasis in preaching shifts primarily to the teaching of doctrine and the offering of praise.³⁸ Ethical injunctions or spiritual advice, from the sixth century onward, are found more commonly in other literary genres such as “question and answer” texts or monastic treatises.³⁹

Although later festal sermons do not employ dialogue as a rhetorical or didactic device as often as do some pre-sixth-century exegetical homilies, it tends to appear in particular contexts, often serving, as in Romanos’s kontakia, to illustrate the Chalcedonian doctrine of Christ’s two natures. Andrew of Crete’s homily on the raising of Lazarus, intended for the Saturday before the beginning of Holy Week,⁴⁰ follows earlier hymnographic and homiletic traditions in its dramatic depiction of this event,⁴¹ beginning with the delivery of the news of Lazarus’s illness to Christ when he is far from Bethany, in a place “across the Jordan” (John 10:40–11:3). The preacher employs both the dialogue provided in the Gospel and that which he has invented in recounting this story; like Romanos the Melode, he uses the latter both to enhance his audience’s understanding of the biblical

characters’ responses to the miracle and to emphasize the human and divine natures of Christ.⁴² Unlike earlier writers, however, Andrew of Crete, in his homily on Lazarus, does not include an imaginative depiction of Hades’ or Death’s reaction to the miracle. Andrew’s more restrained and literal interpretation of the story suggests that he is interested in emphasizing to his congregation the christological more than the cosmic significance of the story.⁴³

Another striking example of a theme that continues to be expounded with dramatic dialogue even as late as the eighth century is the Annunciation. Andrew of Crete and Germanos of Constantinople both treat this subject dramatically in their sermons for this feast.⁴⁴ As Alexander Kazhdan points out, the two preachers differ in their use of dialogue, with Andrew emphasizing both characters’ internal deliberations, while Germanos stresses the drama of their interaction.⁴⁵ The purpose of such extensive dialogic treatment of the scene must be to convey to audiences the momentous and paradoxical consequences of the encounter. Mary is persuaded to accept the conception of Christ in her womb only after lengthy representations by Gabriel and self-questioning have taken place. Germanos’s sermon, which follows the strict structure of two dialogues, in which the Virgin speaks first with Gabriel and then with Joseph with alternating speeches following an alphabetical acrostic, depicts changing attitudes and understanding in each of these characters. While Mary begins by denying the angel’s message, using simple language that reveals her innocence, she concludes in a higher style, quoting the prophets and expressing theological mysteries.

Andrew of Crete and Germanos follow a long tradition of dialogic treatment of the Annunciation, which

³⁷ Exceptions to this rule do of course exist, for example, in the catechetical homilies of Theodore of Stoudios and the anonymous exegetical homilies of the *Theognosia*. For Theodore’s homilies, known as the “Magna” and “Parva” Catecheses, see R. Cholij, *Theodore the Stoudite: The Ordering of Holiness* (Oxford, 2002), 65–73. Various editions exist, including J. Cozza-Luzi, ed., *Novae patrum bibliothecae* (Rome, 1888), vol. 9, parts 1–2; E. Auvray, *Sancti patris nostri confessoris Theodori Studitis praepositi parva cateschesis* (Paris, 1891); A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Τοῦ ὄντος Θεοδόρου τοῦ Στούδίτον Μεγάλη Κατήχησις: Βιβλίον δεύτερον, ἐκδοθέν ὑπὸ τῆς Αὐτοκρατορικῆς ἀρχαιογραφικῆς Επιτροπῆς* (St. Petersburg, 1904). For the anonymous homilies of the *Theognosia*, see T. Antonopoulou, “Homiletic Activity in Constantinople in 900,” in *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics*, ed. M. Cunningham and P. Allen (Leiden, 1998), 336–39. These homilies, which comment on various verses of the Gospels of John and Matthew, are edited in K. Hansmann, *Ein neuentdeckter Kommentar zum Johannes-Evangelium*, Forschungen zur christlichen Literatur- und Dogmengeschichte 16.4–5 (Paderborn, 1930).

³⁸ See Antonopoulou, *The Homilies of the Emperor Leo VI* (n. 28 above), 108–15, 251–60.

³⁹ P. Allen, “Severus of Antioch and the Homily: The End or the Beginning?” in *The Sixth Century: End or Beginning?*, ed. Allen and Jeffreys, 164; see also J. Munitiz, “Catechetical Teaching Aids in Byzantium,” in *Kathegetria: Essays Presented to Joan Hussey for her 80th Birthday*, ed. J. Chrysostomides (Camberley, 1988), 69–83.

⁴⁰ CPG 8177; PG 97:960–85.

⁴¹ See, for example, the homily by Basil of Seleucia, CPG 6663. Ed. M. Cunningham, “Basil of Seleucia’s Homily on Lazarus: A New Edition,” *AB* 104 (1986): 161–84.

⁴² PG 97:977; see also Cunningham, “Dramatic Device or Didactic Tool?” (n. 16 above), 104–5.

⁴³ For further discussion of this homily, see M. Cunningham, “Andreas of Crete’s Homilies on Lazarus and Palm Sunday: The Preacher and His Audience,” *SiP* 31, ed. E. A. Livingstone (Leuven, 1997), 22–26.

⁴⁴ CPG 8174, PG 97:881–913 and CPG 8009, PG 98:320–40, respectively. Combefis published only a partial edition of Germanos’s homily, however, since he based it on one manuscript held in Paris, Cod. Paris. Gr. 773. Another edition, based on one nineteenth-century manuscript but containing the complete homily, was published by D. Fecioru in *Biserica Ortodoxa Romana* 64 (1946): 65–91. I am currently working on a new edition of the homily.

⁴⁵ A. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650–850)* (Athens, 1999), 61: “In Germanos’ work there is stricter organization of material and the perception that events are in motion rather than in mystical uniformity.”

includes not only Romanos in the sixth century, but earlier homilists such as Proclus of Constantinople in the fifth.⁴⁶ The tradition awaits thorough investigation; it is striking, for example, that almost all of the early Greek homilies that survive on this subject are spurious and remain inadequately edited.⁴⁷ It is also unclear whether the homilies, many of which probably date from the fifth or even sixth centuries, reflect an awareness in Greek tradition of the Syriac *sogitha*, a form of liturgical poetry that frequently employed dialogue in its explication of biblical events.⁴⁸ Germanos's homily on the Annunciation is puzzling in many respects: we are left wondering, for example, how the preacher, as well as later readers, performed the sermon.⁴⁹ Its patchy transmission, with most manuscripts dating from after the fourteenth century, suggests that it did not represent a popular liturgical reading in the later Byzantine centuries.⁵⁰

Whether or not Romanos the Melode's two kontakia directly influenced Andrew of Crete's or Germanos of Constantinople's treatment of the Annunciation is thus difficult to prove, in view of the popularity of the theme in both Syriac and Greek liturgical traditions. Nevertheless, certain aspects of his handling of the dramatic implications of the scene resemble that found in the later sermons. In his first kontakion on the Annunciation,

⁴⁶ Pseudo-Gregory Thaumaturgus (*CPG* 1775–76), Pseudo-Athanasius of Alexandria (*CPG* 2268), and Pseudo-John Chrysostom (*CPG* 4519); Basil of Seleucia, *Homily* 39 (*CPG* 6656 [39]) (*BHG* 1112p); Proclus of Constantinople, *Homily* 6 (*CPG* 5805).

⁴⁷ The corpus of homilies still awaits thorough scholarly investigation. Many of the early homilies are spurious, but the two attributed to Basil of Seleucia and Proclus of Constantinople may be authentic. See R. Caro, "La homilética mariana griega en el siglo V," *Modern Library Studies* 4 (1972): 283–344; F. J. Leroy, *L'homilétique de Proclus de Constantinople*, ST 247 (Vatican City, 1967), 273–92.

⁴⁸ See S. Brock, *Bride of Light: Hymns on Mary from the Syriac Churches*, Moran 'Etho 6 (Kottayam, 1994), 12–13.

⁴⁹ G. La Piana's argument that the homilies were performed as liturgical drama, with various speakers taking each role, has not generally been accepted by scholars. See G. La Piana, *Le Rappresentazioni sacre nella letteratura bizantina dalle origini al sec. IX* (Grottaferrata, 1912). The question remains open, however, how one sole preacher or reader would have delivered the uninterrupted dialogue that appears in Germanos's homily on the Annunciation. See Cunningham, "Dramatic Device or Didactic Tool?" (n. 16 above), 112–13.

⁵⁰ The homily is transmitted in fifty-nine manuscripts, of which only five, or possibly six, date from before the fourteenth century. One possibility is that whereas the text was rarely chosen as a liturgical reading in the middle Byzantine period, owing perhaps to its dialogic form, it became a focus of literary interest in later, including post-Byzantine, centuries.

Romanos evokes a sense of audience participation in the lines, "Come! Let us accompany the archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, / And let us greet her as mother and nourisher of our life."⁵¹ Soon the narrative begins: when Gabriel addresses the Virgin, she is filled with doubt. Romanos writes, "The girl, perhaps on <seeing> the form of the shining one, did not feel brave at all, / but again bent her head to the ground and remained silent." She then cries out, "Whatever is this that I see? What shall I think? / The one who is present has a fiery appearance but the voice of a man; / he both disturbs me and emboldens me / when he addresses me with the phrase, / 'Hail, unwedded bride.'"⁵² Throughout the dialogue that follows, Romanos stresses Mary's feelings, showing how she moves gradually from doubt to acceptance of the news. In the eleventh strophe she cries, quoting Luke 1:38, "Let it be, messenger; let it be with me according to your word. / I am the servant of the One who sent you...."⁵³ Verbs such as *ταράττω* (to disturb), *δειλιάω* (to be afraid), and *τρέμω* (to tremble) appear frequently in the narrative. Romanos stresses changes of mood and feeling not only on the part of the Mother of God, but also in the archangel Gabriel and in Joseph.

Germanos also depicts the Theotokos moving slowly from incomprehension and fear to acceptance in his homily on the Annunciation. In dialogue with the archangel she at first doubts her sense impressions in the lines, "Young man, I see the striking beauty of your elegant form and the splendid sight of your figure ... and I ... suspect that you have come to lead me astray," and, "I heard a voice that I did not recognize...."⁵⁴ She suspects that the unknown visitor has come to lead her astray, remembering the misfortune of her ancestress, Eve. As she continues to question the archangel Gabriel, Mary expresses her fear not only at the miraculous and incomprehensible revelation that he brings, but also with respect to her standing in the community and in the eyes of Joseph if she should become pregnant without natural

⁵¹ Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes* (n. 22 above), 2:20.1.1.

⁵² Ibid., 2:24.3.3–4, 7–10. It is interesting that several Syriac *soghyathe* on the Annunciation also describe the archangel Gabriel as "fiery" in appearance. See Hymns 25, 27, 41, etc. in Brock, *Bride of Light* (n. 48 above), 86–88, 93, 112–13, etc. For a discussion of the nature of angels and their depiction in art, see G. Peers, *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium* (Berkeley–Los Angeles–London, 2001).

⁵³ Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, 2:32.11.8–9.

⁵⁴ PG 98:321D–324A.

cause. She is troubled and frightened by the encounter before eventually, in accordance with Luke 1:38, accepting his word.⁵⁵

We will return later in this article to the emphasis on the human aspects of the Mother of God both in Romanos's kontakia and in later Byzantine liturgical writings. The example of the Annunciation hymns and homilies is obviously central to that discussion, as well as to the subject of dramatic dialogue in liturgical writing that we have just examined. On this issue, it is possible to say that Romanos's use of dialogue, combined with his narrative treatment of biblical events, may well have influenced later methods of preaching.

Turning to middle Byzantine hymnography, we will focus especially on the monastic form of the festal kanon, since this is the genre which received the most literary attention from the eighth century onward. Kanons, which may have evolved naturally out of the Palestinian monastic practice of reciting the nine canticles in the course of Orthros, the morning office, with accompanying troparia, represent primarily a meditative rather than didactic form of hymn. Dramatic dialogue, used to make biblical stories real and immediate to contemporary audiences, thus features less here, although, perhaps owing to the influence of homiletics, it is sometimes employed.⁵⁶ The genre tends to focus more, however, on the relationship between the hymnographer, who represents his mainly monastic audience, and his subject matter, much in the tradition of the canticles and Psalms. Such treatment of biblical or festal themes is certainly dramatic, but we may describe it more as soliloquy than as dramatic dialogue of the type that we have so far been examining.

Such a prayerful and meditative approach to Scripture also has antecedents in Romanos's kontakia, however. Emphasizing his complete inadequacy as a human being and his dependence on God, Romanos occasionally calls on Christ for forgiveness with emotional feeling. In his kontakion on the Second Coming, for example, he exclaims in the first stanza, "When I think of your dread tribunal, O Lord supremely good, / and of the day of judg-

ment, / accused by my conscience, I quake and tremble."⁵⁷ Wellesz pointed to the close resemblance between the prologue of Romanos's kontakion on the Crucifixion, which begins, "My soul, my soul, arise! Why are you sleeping? / The end approaches and you are about to be thrown into confusion . . ." and passages in Andrew of Crete's Great Kanon, such as, "The end draws near, O soul, the end draws near, and are you not giving it thought? Are you not preparing? The time grows short, rise up! The Judge is close to the gates. . ."⁵⁸ Both hymns build on the psalmic tradition of human supplication to the all-powerful, but also merciful, God. The Great Kanon refers not only to the canticle that inspires this ode (Habakkuk 3), but also to the prophets and the Psalms.⁵⁹ Above all, however, these passages are intended to draw the congregation, whether lay or monastic, into a state of penitence and reverence for the God who alone can save them.

Romanos the Melode did not invent this penitential form of hymnody. It belongs to the Semitic, as well as Greek, hymnographic traditions and, as we have seen, is found especially in the Psalms, which formed the basis of the early Byzantine monastic offices, especially Vespers and Orthros. Nevertheless, Romanos's interest in the human dimension of Christian revelation, as witnessed both in biblical narratives and in the spiritual response of his congregations, perhaps provided this tradition in Byzantine hymnography with fresh impetus. To return to Andrew of Crete's Great Kanon, which represents one of the best examples of a personal, penitential address to God, we may detect another parallel with Romanos's kontakia. This is the hymnographer's engagement, both dramatically and emotionally, with individual biblical figures from Adam and Eve to the sinful woman with myrrh or the harlot (Mt 26:7; Lk 7:37–38).⁶⁰ Like Romanos, Andrew establishes at least two levels of interpretation in this hymn. From an allegorical point of view, these figures represent timeless examples of particular states of human experience; understood literally and

⁵⁷ J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, ST 283 (Paris, 1981), 5:234.1.1–4; trans. Lash, *Kontakia* (n. 22 above), 221.1.

⁵⁸ Wellesz, *History of Byzantine Music* (n. 4 above), 205; P. Maas and C. A. Trypanis, *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica* (Oxford, 1963), 157.21.1–2; Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes* (n. 26 above), 4:242. Proem.1–2 (in this edition the kontakion is titled "Les puissances infernales"); PG 97:1348B.

⁵⁹ The following verses, for example, evoke Psalms 38 (39): 7; 102 (103): 15–16: "Like a dream, like a flower, the time of life runs away. Why do we disturb ourselves in vain?"

⁶⁰ Andrew of Crete, *The Great Canon*, Ode 8; PG 97:1377B.

⁵⁵ PG 98:332A.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Theophanes Grapto's kanon on the Annunciation, which incorporates a dialogue between the Virgin Mary and Gabriel while maintaining the structure of nine odes made up of short troparia. W. Christ and M. Paranikas, eds., *Anthologia graeca carminum christianorum* (Leipzig, 1871), 236–42. In fact, much of the hymnography associated with this feast emphasizes the narrative and dramatic elements in Luke 1:26–38.

historically, on the other hand, they are individuals with whom Christians can identify.

Middle Byzantine kanons are thus highly rhetorical works which not only teach the theological meaning of individual feasts and saints' days, but also introduce a state of prayerful meditation, penitence, and awe in the minds of their singers and hearers. Although these hymns do not, on the whole, share the narrative, dialogic style of Romanos's kontakia, they are nevertheless dramatic. Kanons stress above all the encounter between Christians and their God, which is illustrated throughout the old and new dispensations and is expressed in liturgical prayer. Indeed, the nature of the kanon, with its thematic emphasis on typology and allegory, distances it from the more literal, narrative style of many kontakia and festal sermons.

One other preoccupation which Romanos the Melode may have bequeathed to his successors in the fields of both homiletics and hymnography is his interest in the cosmic dimensions of the Christian liturgy. This again reflects his as well as later liturgical writers' interest in the encounter between the earthly and heavenly spheres of existence. In his hymn on the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, for example, Romanos alludes frequently to the presence of angels at the scene, as we see first in the proemion: "Let the angelic choir be amazed at the wonder, / and let us mortals shout our hymn of praise, / as we see the ineffable condescension of God; / for aged hands now cradle the One before whom / the powers of heaven tremble, the only Lover of mankind."⁶¹ Interest in angels, and their role as intermediaries between God and humanity, may represent a new development in the sixth century, reflecting a growing sense of the mystical dimensions of liturgical worship.⁶² Texts such as the Cherubic Hymn, which according to legend was composed by the emperor Justinian, convey the idea that a cosmic liturgy is being celebrated, not only in church in the company of angels, but also by the

⁶¹ Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes* (n. 22 above), 2:174. Proem. 1, 1–6; trans. Lash, *Kontakia*, 3.

⁶² See Allen, "Severus of Antioch and the Homily" (n. 39 above), 163–65, 170–71, who argues that earlier Byzantine homiletics, including especially the works of John Chrysostom, feature a "high" angelology in which the celestial and earthly spheres remain quite separate. Allen suggests that two factors may have contributed to increased interest in angels in the sixth century: the endorsement of a high Christology at the ecumenical councils, which resulted in a need for mediators between the divine and human spheres, and a rise of popular spirituality and its accompanying theological literature.

whole of creation.⁶³ This concept received full expression in the seventh-century *Mystagogy* of Maximos the Confessor.⁶⁴

Turning to our final topic, namely, the increasingly personal, or again, dramatic, treatment of Mary, the Mother of God, in Romanos's kontakia and in later hymns and homilies,⁶⁵ it is necessary first to acknowledge the ground-breaking work of Ioli Kalavrezou in this field.⁶⁶ Noting the changing depiction of the Virgin in both literature and art between the sixth and ninth centuries, Kalavrezou argues that emphasis on the humanity of Christ during the period of Iconoclasm may in part be responsible for increasing interest in his mother's human and motherly qualities.⁶⁷ Changes appeared first in texts and were followed sometime afterward in art.⁶⁸ The later view of Mary as a tender, motherly figure, bending her

⁶³ See H. Wybrew, *The Orthodox Liturgy: The Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite* (London, 1996), 83–84; H.-J. Schulz, *The Byzantine Liturgy: Symbolic Structure and Faith Expression* (New York, 1986).

⁶⁴ CPG 7704; PG 91:657–717. See also R. Bornert, *Les commentaires byzantins de la divine liturgie du VIIe au XVe siècle* (Paris, 1966), 83–124.

⁶⁵ Emotion, or pathos, in fact represents a significant and extensive topic of scholarly study in recent years, with ancient background in both philosophical and rhetorical traditions. See, for example, R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford, 2000); R. Williams, "Macrina's Deathbed Revisited: Gregory of Nyssa on Mind and Passion," in *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity: Essays in Tribute to George Christopher Stead*, ed. L. R. Wickham and C. P. Bammel (Leiden, 1993), 227–46.

⁶⁶ See I. Kalavrezou, "When the Virgin Mary Became *Meter Theou*," *DOP* 44 (1990): 165–72; eadem, "The Maternal Side of the Virgin," in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Athens–Milan, 2000), 41–45.

⁶⁷ See also I. Kalavrezou, "Exchanging Embrace: The Body of Salvation," in Vassilaki, *Images of the Mother of God* (n. 30 above), 103–15; N. Tsironis, "The Mother of God in the Iconoclastic Controversy," in Vassilaki, *Mother of God: Representations*, 27–39.

⁶⁸ I would like here to offer one caveat to Kalavrezou's thesis: while this convincingly describes a general trend in Marian devotion, more nuanced and detailed work on texts of the middle Byzantine period is still required. Apart from the sympathetic treatment of the Virgin Mary in homilies and hymns on the Annunciation, as noted above, emphasis on her "motherly" qualities does not feature prominently in liturgical writings of the eighth century. Hymnographers and homilists do frequently call Mary "Mother of God," but this represents a title, equivalent to "Theotokos," more than it does a descriptive epithet. The predominant image in most eighth-century Marian homilies is that of a figure who remains powerful and remote because of her importance in the mystery of the Incarnation. See L. Brubaker and M. Cunningham, *The Virgin Mary in the Byzantine World, 600–900: Relics, Icons, and Texts* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

head toward her cradled child or weeping at the foot of the cross, contrasts markedly with earlier preferences for Old Testament types, epithets that convey her theological significance in the Incarnation, and, in art, more formal depictions of a remote, impassive figure.⁶⁹ In contrast with earlier homiletic and hymnographic treatment of the Virgin Mary, Romanos portrays her as a many-sided character. She experiences a range of emotions, including doubt, uncertainty, motherly love, and inconsolable sorrow, occasionally even provoking a reprimand from Christ for her grief and lack of understanding concerning his passion.⁷⁰

Examples of Romanos's portrayal of the Virgin's human, emotional response to the supernatural events in which she plays a part appear in a number of kontakia that deal either directly or indirectly with the Mother of God. In the hymn on the Nativity, Mary contemplates the newborn child and is amazed;⁷¹ when she hears the words of the magi she bows down and addresses Christ "with tears."⁷² In the kontakion on the Presentation in the Temple, the Virgin ponders how "she became a mother yet remained a virgin. / Realising that the birth was beyond nature, she was afraid and trembled."⁷³ Perhaps the most striking example of Romanos's handling of pathos appears in his kontakion on the Lament of the Mother of God at the foot of the cross. He describes Mary's bitter sorrow as she watches "her own lamb being dragged to slaughter."⁷⁴ Out of deep grief (*ἐκ λύπης βαρείας*), Mary cries and weeps at the prospect both of Christ's abandonment by his own

disciples and of his approaching death. Although he tries to console her, arguing that he can save humankind only by submitting to the crucifixion, Mary clings to her love for her physical son.

Niki Tsironis has shown how later preachers and hymnographers also expounded this theme, focusing on texts such as Germanos's sermon on the burial of Christ⁷⁵ and Photios's and George of Nicomedia's sermons for Friday and Saturday in Holy Week.⁷⁶ Although these preachers all stress the overwhelming grief experienced by Mary at the death of Christ, they take pains to show that she remains free of the selfish passions of human nature. Her suffering reflects a painful process of transition, from selfless motherly love to a realization of the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection. According to Tsironis, George of Nicomedia possesses a "dynamic perception" of the Virgin's character; this causes him to depict her as a person who is not blindly obedient, but who moves from incomprehension and denial to acceptance of the crucifixion.⁷⁷ Romanos the Melode's kontakion on the Lament, with its dramatic dialogue between Mary and Christ and its portrayal of her grief, represents a clear precursor of the later sermons on the same subject. It is thus tempting to accept that Romanos's treatment of the Virgin Mary exerted a direct influence on later, especially ninth-century, preachers.

In conclusion, let us sum up the various points covered in this article. First, it is worth reiterating the call for further studies of Romanos the Melode's influence on post-sixth-century hymnography. While the two main hymnographic forms, kontakion and kanon, evolved separately, evidence of mutual influence does exist, especially in the ninth century, when many hymnographers, such as Theodore of Stoudios, were composing both. Above all, we need more detailed literary and theological studies of both hymnographic forms. Kanons in the hands of such masters as John of Damascus represent intricate constructions in which typology, prophecy, metaphor, and many other methods of biblical exegesis

⁶⁹ Kalavrezou, "When the Virgin Mary Became *Meter Theou*" (n. 66 above), 165–67. See also H. Maguire, "The Empress and the Virgin on Display in Sixth-Century Art," in *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies, London 21–26 August, 2006*, vol. 1, *Plenary Papers*, ed. E. Jeffreys (Aldershot, 2006), 379–95; idem, "Body, Clothing, Metaphor: The Virgin in Early Byzantine Art," in *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images*, ed. L. Brubaker and M. Cunningham (Aldershot, forthcoming).

⁷⁰ For example, in the kontakion on the Lament at the foot of the Cross, Christ says to her, "Put away, then, put away your grief. / You should not lament, for you were named full of Grace. / Do not cover up your title with weeping. Do not make yourself like those without understanding, all-wise maiden." Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes* (n. 26 above), 4:166.5.1–4; trans. Lash, *Kontakia* (n. 22 above), 145.5.

⁷¹ Ὁρῶ σε, σπλάγχνον, καὶ καταπλήττομαι: Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes* (n. 22 above), 2:52.2.5.

⁷² κλαίουσα εἰπε: ibid., 2:56.6.3.

⁷³ Ibid., 2:178.3.3–4; trans. Lash, *Kontakia*, 28.3.

⁷⁴ Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, 4:160.1.1–2; trans. Lash, *Kontakia*, 143.1.

⁷⁵ CPG 8032, PG 98:244–90. The authorship of this sermon is disputed, however, with J. Darrouzès arguing that it was written by Germanos II (patriarch 1223–40), *DSp* 40 (Paris, 1965): 311.

⁷⁶ N. Tsironis, "The Lament of the Virgin Mary from Romanos the Melode to George of Nicomedia: An Aspect of the Development of the Marian Cult" (PhD thesis, King's College London, 1998), esp. 271–90. See also eadem, "George of Nicomedia: Convention and Originality in the Homily on Good Friday," *StP* 30 (1997): 332–36.

⁷⁷ Tsironis, "Lament of the Virgin Mary," 287.

come together.⁷⁸ Romanos's works had an impact on kanons as well as on later kontakia, but it remains for a future researcher to explore exactly how this influence manifested itself.

Secondly, we examined three features which are prominent in the kontakia of Romanos and which may have influenced later hymns and festal homilies. The first of these is Romanos's use of dramatic dialogue in his exegesis of Scripture and as a didactic method, which may well have influenced middle and later Byzantine preachers. Romanos did not invent this technique, which has both Syriac and Greek homiletic roots, but he did provide it with new life in his vivid re-enactment of biblical stories. Related to this, and also evident especially in the later monastic genre of the kanon, is the hymnographer's role as narrator and mediator for the audience. Romanos aims in some kontakia to induce a penitential frame of mind; in others he envisages a spiritual encounter between himself, or his audience, and the subject of the hymn, which may be Christ, a biblical character, or a saint. This technique, which again seems to have gained fresh impetus at the hands of Romanos, represents an important element in eighth- and ninth-century kanons. Finally, Romanos's interest in the human qualities of Mary, the Mother of God, has parallels with middle Byzantine homilies on the Annunciation, but may be contrasted with more formal depictions in a wealth of other liturgical texts. On the

basis of all this evidence, we may tentatively conclude that Romanos the Melode's influence was significant, but also subservient to specific liturgical requirements. We know that Romanos's kontakia continued to be sung in vigils celebrated in Constantinopolitan churches, besides being excerpted for use in the office of Orthros.⁷⁹ By the ninth century, or perhaps even as early as the eighth, the liturgical contexts for dramatic dialogue had largely been determined; thus, Romanos the Melode's legacy lived on in some subjects, such as the Annunciation or Mary's lament at the cross, whereas others, such as the Marian feasts which were added only later to the calendar, developed more theological and typological forms of discourse.

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⁷⁸ See A. Louth, *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford, 2002), 252–82.

⁷⁹ A frequently cited example of Romanos's kontakia being sung in vigils is the account in the *Miracles of Artemios* of “a certain man who from a tender age used to attend the all-night vigil of the Forerunner and who sang the hymns of the humble Romanos, <who rests> among the saints, right up to the present day.” See V. S. Crisafulli and J. W. Nesbitt, trans., *The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium* (Leiden–New York–Cologne, 1997), Miracle 18, 114 (modifications to the English translation for the sake of clarity are my own).